Linsell house has history

By Julie M. Stephens
THE SOUTH END

Students armed with backpacks scurry past so as not to be late for their next class. Some stop to note the historical Frederick Linsell house, or better known on Wayne State University campus as the Dean’s office for the College Fine, Performing and Communication Arts.

The street which passed in front of the house was 2nd Avenue, but in 1978 it was renamed Gullen Mall, after WSU president George E. Gullen for his service to the university.

The Linsell house stands inconsistent among the bookstore, library and fountain area on Gullen Mall. The 13 room house, built by Linsell in 1905, simply has little meaning for most, however if one were to take a stroll through the inner walls, they would soon realize its prestige.

Overlooking the Science and Engineering Library through a delicate Palladium bay window, Richard Biliatis, associate dean for the department, said, “The Linsell house is remarkably tended to for a place that has been used institutionally. It has had some renovations made over the years, but there wasn’t much necessary to do because it was never misreated.”

Gesturing towards the oak wainscotting, window frames and stairway, he said, “Linsell was an office furniture manufacturer, which is why the woodwork is so remarkably special. Look at it, it is beautiful,” he said, smoothing his hand down the railing, “It makes sense for the wood to have this much detail since it was his profession.”

Downstairs in the elegant conference room, which was once a dining area, the rich mahogany wainscotting extends five feet from the floor absorbing each stray wave of light. The sound is quickly absorbed by the large oriental rug as Emmece Papaček, president of Sylmar records walks over to the left of the room revealing two of the room’s luxuries: a secret panel in the wall which once provided shelter for important documents, and a butler’s bell on the floor under the mahogany conference table.

“These are two options that have lost their appeal in conference room settings lately,” said Papaček laughingly.

The oddity of the home is the contrast provided by the modern office decor and the richly developed interior. Computational stands mounted on desks in the hallways, bedrooms, parlors and the foyer. Telephones echo through the walls. Piles of paperwork encroach the desks.

A corner in the maid’s quarters and a microwave in the butler’s kitchen avail their services for use.

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the busy crew.
“...the house struggles to open the front door. She watches the circular image in the glass and buzzes the secret door release switch.

Unfortunately, the front door is not the only thing that appears to be in need of repair in the Linsell house. “With the erection of so many large buildings nearby the house has settled unevenly causing the walls to crack,” said David Magidson, dean of the department. “We would like to have them fixed but we are not going to keep them until the additional undergraduates are here.”

When opening, one instantly affirms the home’s continuing maintenance. Taking an opportunity to relax and gain the atmosphere, persons engage their minds in completing the daily work routine. Such a house would appear to hold persons with a cool, relaxed nature, however, upon gazing out toward the massive building structures, one could see the home as a place of solace. Offering solace to researchers and students is my daily purpose.”

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bread; a black choker necklace reveals the upper contour of her thin and bloodless neck. It is strange that the portrait is encased in a contemporary gold metal frame for it seems to symbolize the existing time warp present throughout the home.

Discerning the value of the Linsell house as one looks outward on the hustle of campus life is a difficult task. The intricate woodwork provides the comfort of the past and the solid foundation upon which it was built ensures security for the future. The house’s surroundings may continue to grow inconsistently, however, this historical monument surely holds its own to any modern structure on campus.

due to the fact that approximately 95 percent of them were produced by the department’s staff and alumni.

On the second floor a print of an oil portrait is hung at the west end of the hall near the window “Madame Paul Puiisson,” by John Singer Sargent (1856-1925) had captured the essence. The sun streams across a woman’s face which appears to resemble a woman who may have occupied the house when it was built. She stands in a white dress with an attached bustle; her maroon robe belles at the